Pomerelle Ski Area Improvements

Lift Replacement, Grading, and Snowmaking Pond



USFS Report #s: SW-15-2883/INFRA R2015041402883 USFS Site #: SW-2247 SHPO Site #: _____

November 2015

By: Kerry Davis, Architectural Historian Preservation Solutions LLC — Boise, ID

Abstract

This report documents the results of a cultural resources investigation conducted to identify and evaluate above-ground historic resources that may be impacted by improvements proposed at the Pomerelle Ski Area in the Albion Division of the Minidoka Ranger District in the Sawtooth National Forest, approximately 12 miles SE of Albion, Idaho. The proposed improvements include: 1) the replacement of a nonhistoric chairlift; 2) completion of selected grading; and 3) introduction of a water retention pond for snowmaking.

CERTIFICATION OF RESULTS

I certify that this investigation was conducted and documented according to Secretary of Interior's Standards and guidelines and that the report is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

11/10/15

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Key Information

PROJECT NAME

Pomerelle Ski Area Improvements

PROJECT NUMBER(S)

USFS Report #s: SW-15-2883/INFRA R2015041402883

USFS Site #: SW-2247

SHPO Site #:_____

LOCATION

Cassia County

USGS QUADS

Connor Ridge, 7.5'

LEGAL LOCATION OF SURVEY

T13S, 24E, Sections 1, 2, 11, 12

PROJECT AREA

520 Acres

AREA SURVEYED

340 Acres Intensive Survey

180 Acres Reconnaissance Survey

PROJECT DATA

1 Previously recorded cultural resource

1 New Historic District (comprised of 36 new structures, sites, buildings) located and/or recorded

AUTHORS

Kerry Davis, Architectural Historian

FEDERAL AGENCY

USFS

REPORT PREPARED FOR

Sawtooth National Forest

REPOSITORY

Sawtooth National Forest; Idaho SHPO

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR

Kerry Davis, M.S.

DATE

11/10/2015

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Project Description

Pomerelle Mountain Resort contracted Preservation Solutions LLC (PSLLC) in August 2015 to complete a cultural resource investigation in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, regarding proposed developments at Pomerelle Mountain Resort in Albion (vicinity), Cassia County, Idaho. The proposed improvements will upgrade the existing recreational infrastructure at the ski area. This report considers three project components: 1) the replacement of the existing double 1976 chairlift; 2) completion of grading along the upper ridge of the ski area; and 3) the introduction of a water retention pond for snowmaking. The proposed project actions are an undertaking of Pomerelle Mountain Resort under the permitting jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service (USFS).

More specifically, the proposed improvements are as follows:

- 1) Replacement of the existing double chairlift, as proposed, is comprised of removal of the existing nonhistoric 1976 double chairlift (including its associated base and upper stations) and installation of a new triple chairlift system along the same alignment. The existing chairlift is a noncontributing structure to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area (see photos 5-10 below and attached IHSI form). The new lift will be the same length, will have the same number of support towers, and will require no significant tree cutting (if any). This chairlift replacement will replace the existing, out-of-date 40-year-old lift equipment and provide a lift meeting current safety standards, as well as increase skier transport capacity. The new lift will have both a base station and an upper station. The new base station will be at the same location as the nonhistoric lift's base terminal. The base drive station will be at 7,725' elevation and have sheltered mechanicals including a 13.5' bull wheel, all of which is supported by/cantilevered from an L-shaped reinforced concrete mast column, the footprint of which will measure about 2'-x-15.5'. The metal shelter enclosure has a rectangular form with a curved end wall facing north east. Four tall, narrow fixed windows are grouped toward the center of each side elevation. The shelter entrance is through a door centered in the southwest end elevation, accessed by an open metal stair. The base station will stand about 23' in-height and span a rectangular footprint area about 21'-x-44'. The top return station will be at 8,313' elevation and be a simple exposed 13.5' bull wheel design supported by/cantilevered from a central reinforced concrete mast column, the footprint of which will measure about 8'-x-2'. The top station will stand about 11' in-height and span an area about 14'-x-30'. Nine towers between each station will support the cables between these stations. Each tower will be tubular steel and range in height from 33' to 42' depending on location and grade below. Each of the chairs will accommodate three riders. (See elevation drawings below.)
- 2) The proposed grading will occur off the southeast edge of the upper part of Bull Run in a wide open treeless area. The grading will consist of leveling sufficient to allow windblown snow to collect and naturally form a skiable path approximately 300' long and 50' wide connecting Bull with a skiable area informally referred to as the Race Course or Barry's run (see photo 11). Bull Run is a contributing ski trail site to the NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area.

3) The proposed introduction of a water retention pond will amplify the snowmaking capacity of the ski area. The proposed pond will be located at the east edge of the nonhistoric Twin Lakes run and, being in open space, will require no tree clearance. The pond construction will consist of grading sufficient to construct embankments, installation of an impermeable membrane and associated distribution piping equipment, and the introduction of a 6' chain link perimeter fence. The pond will be similar in profile and structure to the existing pond at the east edge of Spring Creek run (which was installed in the 2009 and has a surface area of approximately 0.13 acres (see photos 12-13)), but will have a larger surface area and greater water holding capacity. Twin Lakes Run is a nonhistoric ski trail dating to 1998, is ineligible for NRHP listing, and is outside the boundaries of the NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area (see attached IHSI form).

Project Area of Potential Effect (APE)

Per consultation with Idaho SHPO Archaeologist, Mary Anne Davis, on September 15, 2015, the APE is restricted to the project site special use permit area. There is no anticipated indirect impact outside the permit area. (See APE map below.)

Environmental Setting

The proposed project site is located approximately 12 miles southeast of Albion, Idaho, on Howell Canyon Road. At an elevation ranging between 7,640' and 8,650' feet above sea level, the climate features summertime highs in the 80s Fahrenheit and wintertime lows around 10 degrees Fahrenheit. The immediate setting is mountainous and the project site has a northerly aspect with slopes varying from 10 percent to 30 percent grade. The area is generally forested, dominated by lodge pole pine, subalpine fir, and aspen, with intervening expanses of natural and manmade open grass- and sagecovered areas. Recreational development, in the form of ski trails, chairlift structures, support buildings, and a parking area, characterizes the permit area, which is accessed by the paved Howell Canyon Road from the north.



Cultural Setting

Originally used for cattle and sheep grazing in the late 19th and early 20th century, the project site and vicinity came under federal management in 1906 as part of the Raft River Forest Reserve (which was incorporated into the Minidoka National Forest in 1908, which itself was later absorbed into Sawtooth National Forest in 1953). Though lower sections of Howell Canyon were developed for recreational uses during the early 20th century and a road to Lake Cleveland passed nearby as early as 1916, the project site was not developed until the late 1950s. The site reflects late 1950s through mid-1960s winter recreational development. Please see the attached Idaho Historic Sites Inventory form for an expanded discussion of the ski area's development history.

Pre-Field Research

Results from Idaho Record Search #15391 were received on September 15, 2015.

Previous Cultural Resources Studies

Numerous cultural resources studies have taken place in the vicinity over the years, primarily triggered by USFS actions such as campground and road improvements, and salvage sale surveys dating from 1989 through 2013. However, only one previous study report took place within the current APE – Report #1996/992 entitled "Pomerelle Expansion," completed by C. Wells in 1996 (SW-96-1752). This study surveyed 640 acres across the permit area and documented a single isolate – Historic Rock Piles (10CA858/SW-1258), which is just outside the southeast edge of the APE (see APE map below).

Summary of previous studies in this area (within one mile of the special use permit boundary).

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Expected Cultural Resources

Only one previously documented cultural resource site is abutting the APE: Historic Rock Piles (10CA858/FS# SW-1285), which is just outside the southeast edge of the APE, was minimally documented in 1996, and determined NRHP-ineligible. The next closest documented historic site is the Rainbow Campground (10CA694/FS# SW-697). Located less than a mile down Howell Canyon Road, this site was documented in 1993 and again in 2008, with eligibility undetermined per SHPO request for more information sufficient to determine eligibility.

The region around present-day Pomerelle Ski Area served primarily as open range grazing lands for cattle and sheep during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the establishment of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) under President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905, millions of acres across Idaho and throughout the West were drawn into the National Forest system. As part of this shift in land use management, the area including the Albion Mountains was designated as part of the Raft River Forest Reserve in 1906. Two years later, the USFS consolidated the Raft River Forest Reserve with nearby Cassia Forest Reserve under the name Minidoka National Forest (Minidoka NF) and began regulating grazing and timber harvesting by means of permits.

With the increasing affordability and popularity of the automobile during the early 20th century, the advent of improved roads into previously remote and rugged regions allowed a growing number of tourists to access the natural wonders of the national forests. Recreation in Minidoka NF increased significantly in this era and a shift in use and management from grazing and timber harvesting toward recreation took place. In 1917, Minidoka NF initiated reporting on recreation and noted 5,935 individuals visited the forest that year. By the early 1920s, campgrounds with latrines supported recreationalists at five locations in the Minidoka NF, among which were two sites in the Albion Mountains – one at Independence Lake(s) and one at Lake Cleveland, just three miles above present-day Pomerelle.16 In just two years between 1928 and 1930 the number of visitors increased over 67 percent, with 10,865 people entering the forest.

With the onset of the Great Depression came establishment of the programs of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which significantly impacted not only the state's economic conditions, but also the Idaho landscape. In particular, these federal programs spurred significant improvements on National Forest lands. With New Deal appropriations came funding for USFS projects for campgrounds, water systems, sanitary facilities, recreational areas, and so forth. In Minidoka NF, Howell Canyon received numerous enhancements. In addition to campground and road improvements was the establishment of Howell Canyon Ski Area a few miles down the canyon from present-day Pomerelle Ski Area.

While skiing grew in popularity during the first half of the 20th century, it expanded at a meteoric rate after World War II. Recreational tourism grew rapidly nationwide during this period, and skiing came of age and boomed across the country, as economic growth, technological advances, and energetic consumption supported expansion of skiing as a destination activity. Following the same national trend of post-World War II construction and development, establishment of ski areas rose dramatically in the decades following the War. Nationwide, fifty-eight (58) ski areas opened in the 1950s, with another 107 ski areas established across the country in the 1960s. This period being the peak of ski area development in the 20th century and also the time of establishment and significant expansion of Pomerelle Ski Area.

With three separate project site components across approximately 520 acres of USFS land, the proposed work is taking place in an area that is and has historically been rural and recreational in character. Historic recreational resources and cultural landscape features, as well as rural ranching resources/isolates are expected throughout the vicinity and within the current APE. However, since the project components are restricted to selected areas within the special use permit area, the only new site expected is the potentially impacted late 1950s through mid- 1960s ski area that has not yet been recorded; this site, Pomerelle Ski Area, was recorded as part of this investigation.

Field Methodology

Preservation Solutions architectural Historian, Kerry Davis, M.S., served as project manager, field photograpgher, researcher, and cultural resource assessment author. Pomerelle Mountain Resort General Managers, Woody and Sandy Anderson, provided PSLLC with all available plans, maps, and associated project materials. Davis requested and paid for the required SHPO Record Search (#15391) and reviewed the available records through Idaho SHPO to identify any previously documented National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-eligible or NRHP-listed properties within the APE.

Davis contacted Idaho SHPO staff, Mary Anne Davis, and Sawtooth National Forest Archaeologist, Bret Guisto, in August and September 2015 for verification of documentation methodology and confirmation of the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Consultation with both USFS and SHPO staff confirmed the APE for both direct and indirect visual effects was to be limited to the special use permit area. The project additionally required the Pomerelle Ski Area be documented sufficient to determine NRHP eligibility, documentation of which is enclosed with this submittal.

Additional research included review of Pomerelle Mountain Resort records, and USFS cultural resource and winter recreation records in Twin Falls and Burley, as well as the utilization of the online collections of David Rumsey Map Collection, historicmapworks.com, the Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, and the *Idaho Statesman* Historical Archive, available through the Boise Public Library.

The field survey to document both direct and indirect visual effects took place during the week of September 3, 2015, and included: a windshield survey to determine the limit of visibility of the project site(s); photographic documentation of the project site(s); and documentation of Pomerelle Ski Area sufficient to determine NRHP eligibility. Due to a change in scope of work, as directed by USFS staff and confirmed with SHPO staff, the original fieldwork took place prior to receipt of SHPO record search results. A subsequent site visit was considered, however based on the record search results and the limited APE, the level of field documentation from the original site visit was deemed sufficient and no additional field documentation was required.

The probability of archaeological resources being present or being affected within the APE is minimal and an archaeological survey was not completed per consultation with USFS and SHPO cultural resources staff.

Results

All cultural resources recorded and pre-recorded in/abutting the project area (see Maps section below):

<u>Site #</u>	Site/Feature Type	NR Status	Distance to APE	Project Effect
10CA858/SW-1258	Historic Rock Piles	Not Eligible	Outside/Abutting	n/a
SW-2247	Pomerelle Ski Area HD	Eligible	Within APE	no adverse effect

A total of two (2) sites were identified within or immediately abutting the current APE. One (1) is an ineligible site and the other is the NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area Historic District (SW-2247/SHPO Temp. No. POM-01), documented as part of this investigation.

SW-2247

The Pomerelle Ski Area – SW-2247 (SHPO Temp No. POM-01) – comprises approximately 340 acres within the larger Pomerelle Mountain Resort that spans about 520 acres on the northerly slopes of an unnamed highpoint (8,762') just east of Mt. Harrison (9,265') in the Albion Mountains. At the south rim of Snake River valley, Pomerelle Ski Area is approximately 25 miles south of I-84 at exit 216; twelve miles southeast of Albion, Cassia County, Idaho, on State Highway 77.

The full permit area comprising Pomerelle Mountain Resort features twenty-four (24) groomed slopes, two terrain parks, and two triple chair lifts and a 450' magic carpet providing a vertical drop of about 1,000'. The NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area district is a subset of this area.

The NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area spans an elevation range of approximately 7,640 feet (at the parking area) to about 8,650 feet and is characterized by its network of ski runs cleared from stands of mature lodge pole pine, subalpine fir, and aspen. The NRHP-eligible area includes thirty (30) resources, comprised of thirteen (13) contributing sites, five (5) contributing buildings, one (1) contributing structure, seven (7) noncontributing sites, two (2) noncontributing building, and two (2) non-contributing structures. An additional six (6) ineligible resources currently part of the Pomerelle Mountain Resort operations are found adjacent outside the NRHP-eligible area boundaries.

The nineteen (19) contributing resources include sites, buildings, and a structure constructed between ca. 1935 and c1966. Of the eleven (11) non-contributing resources all are currently less than fifty years of age, the oldest of which will become potentially eligible within three years. With only eleven (11) non-contributing resources, over 63 percent of the resources contribute to the significance of the ski area. The non-contributing resources do not significantly impact the overall visual and functional cohesiveness of the historic ski area. The ski area continues to clearly communicate its historic winter recreational setting and landscape.

Within the boundaries, the Pomerelle Ski Area retains the representative core of historic winter recreational resources and characteristic slopes and ridges. The area's location, topography, setting, and the spatial organization of its resources reflect the mid-twentieth century ascension of skiing as a winter recreational activity. All of the extant resources served either a recreational function or directly

supported the recreational use of the ski area. The resources range from ski trail sites, chairlift structures, and supporting buildings. As a contiguous grouping of mid-twentieth resources that historically operated in concert to create a recreational experience, the NRHP-eligible area retains its historic integrity and continues to communicate information about its historic development as one of Idaho's historic ski areas, and associations with significant patterns of events in recreational history and the development of the Minidoka Ranger District of the Sawtooth National Forest.

Per NRHP guidelines, the Pomerelle Ski Area is most appropriately documented as a Historic District comprised of buildings, structures, and sites forming a Designed Historic Landscape,¹ and as the location of a pattern of locally significant events.

The Pomerelle Ski Area is significant under Criterion A in the area of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION. The District includes the contiguous grouping of recreational resources that retain integrity and continue to reflect the evolution of the ski area from the 1950s though the mid-1960s. The ski area is locally significant in the area of Recreation for its associations with the ascension of skiing as a winter recreation activity in the U.S. Forest Service system coinciding with developments in transportation and nationwide patterns of increased popularity of skiing. The NRHP-eligible area's resources communicate historic trends in ski area development, physically representing the spectrum of ski run and lift design, as well as transitions in skier expectations of amenities over time. The District's period of significance begins in ca. 1935 with the construction of the earliest building and site, and ends in 1966 at the recognized fifty-year cut-off date established by the National Park Service to provide sufficient passage of time to allow objective evaluation of the historic resources at the time of its listing. The period of significance acknowledges historic alterations in response to specific functional and marketing needs and counts resources that experienced such alterations within the period of significance as contributing elements to the District.

There is the possibility of the ski area being additionally eligible under Criterion C for the design of some of its ski runs. The USFS no longer allows the straight, unnatural cuts and requires edges of clearings be 'feathered' to reflect more natural openings. However, the research required to substantiate this area of significance is outside the scope of work for this project. Should the area be nominated to the National Register, this potential significance criterion should be researched and evaluated.

Not previously surveyed, for the purposes of this project the site was recorded at the intensive level. For further information please see the attached Idaho Historic Sites Inventory Form.

10CA858/SW-1258

This site consists of a single rock pile measuring 1.5 meters high and 1 meter in diameter. There are no associated artifacts. The site was recorded as an isolated find in 1996 as part of the Pomerelle Expansion Project (Report SW-69-1752). The site was determined to be not eligible at that time.

¹ Review of NRHP Bulletins 18 and 30 for Designed Historic Landscapes and Rural Historic Landscapes, indicates parks and recreation areas are better suited for the Designed Historic Landscape evaluation methodology; the Rural Historic Landscape category is better suited for those landscapes reflecting "day-to-day occupational activities" and that have "developed and evolved in response to both the forces of nature and the pragmatic need to make a living."

Management Recommendations

The Pomerelle Ski Area continues to be used in its original, historic recreational function. Overall the proposed work, which includes three distinct project components, will have NO ADVERSE EFFECT. Due to previous disturbance, there is a low potential for the presence of sub-surface historic or prehistoric archaeological material.

Determination of Effects

More specifically, the determination of effect of each separate project component is outlined below:

- 1. The proposed chairlift replacement will have NO ADVERSE EFFECT on historic resources. The existing lift is nonhistoric (constructed in 1976), is noncontributing to the NRHP-eligible Pomerelle Ski Area (see attached IHSI form), and its removal has no direct effect on historic resources. The new lift will be installed along the same nonhistoric alignment cut in 1976 and will present no new indirect visual impacts to historic resources in the vicinity, as it will be of the same length and elevation, its base and upper stations will be in the same location as the existing stations, and there will be the same number of towers which will be essentially the same height as the existing towers.
- 2. The proposed grading will have NO ADVERSE EFFECT on historic resources. The grading off the southeast edge of Bull Run is outside the boundary of the NRHP-eligible core of the ski area and takes place on a treeless area so there will be no significant visual change or indirect visual impact on historic resources within the viewshed.
- 3. The proposed water retention pond to be located on Twin Lakes run will have NO EFFECT on historic resources, as Twin Lakes is a nonhistoric ski trail dating to 1998 and is well outside the boundaries of the NRHP-eligible area of Pomerelle Ski Area.

Avoidance, Minimization, or Mitigation Options

Based on the Determinations of Effects above there will be NO ADVERSE EFFECT to NRHP-eligible resources and no proposed work item warrants discussion of Avoidance and/or Minimization.

Conclusions

The proposed project improvements include three distinct components. Overall there will be **NO ADVERSE EFFECT** to historic properties as a result of these proposed project actions: 1) <u>the chairlift</u> <u>replacement</u>, 2) <u>the grading</u>, or 3) <u>the snowmaking pond</u>. Furthermore, because these actions are limited, there is no possibility for indirect effects or impacts. It is recommended that these project components be allowed to proceed as proposed.

The objective of this report was to identify and determine potential effects to historic resources. As was expected, this investigation revealed intact historic resources clearly communicating historic associations with winter recreational development in Idaho and on USFS land, in particular. The intensive level survey within the special use permit area allowed for, and will continue to allow for, accurate assessment of potential impacts to individual resources, as well as to the NRHP-eligible district as a whole. As a continuously operating ski area, the need for infrastructure upgrades is ongoing. The documentation associated with this project (see attached IHSI form) follows a USFS-approved format and methodology and provides a solid basis for Section 106 review and compliance. Not only is the review and compliance process streamlined, but because many of Idaho's active ski areas are on USFS land and date to the early to mid-20th century, this documentation contributes to the limited existing documentation of this part of Idaho history.

Copies of this report have been filed with the Sawtooth NF in Twin Falls and with the Idaho SHPO.

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- Landman, Joan, and David. Where to Ski: Ski Guide to the U.S. and Canada. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949.
- McCullough, Robert, et al. "Mad River Glen Ski Area Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Burlington, Vermont: University of Vermont Historic Preservation Program, 2012.
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Sawtooth National Forest Records

Photograph Collection.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Forest Service. "Sawtooth National Forest Progress Report for 1964." Twin Falls, Idaho: Sawtooth National Forest, 1964.

Winter Recreation Permit Files.

<u>Newspapers</u>

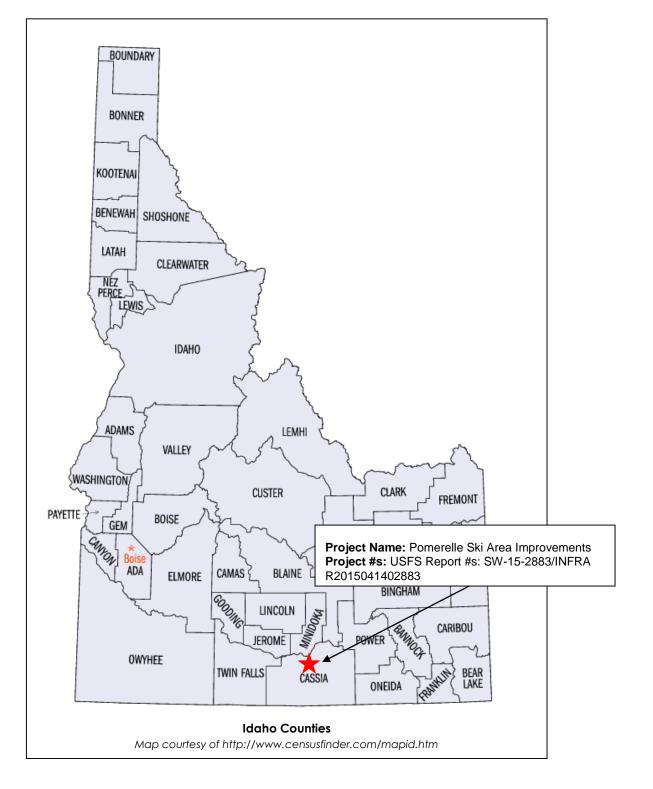
- "Craters of the Moon has a stab a becoming a national park," *The Deseret News,* November 22, 1989, 39.
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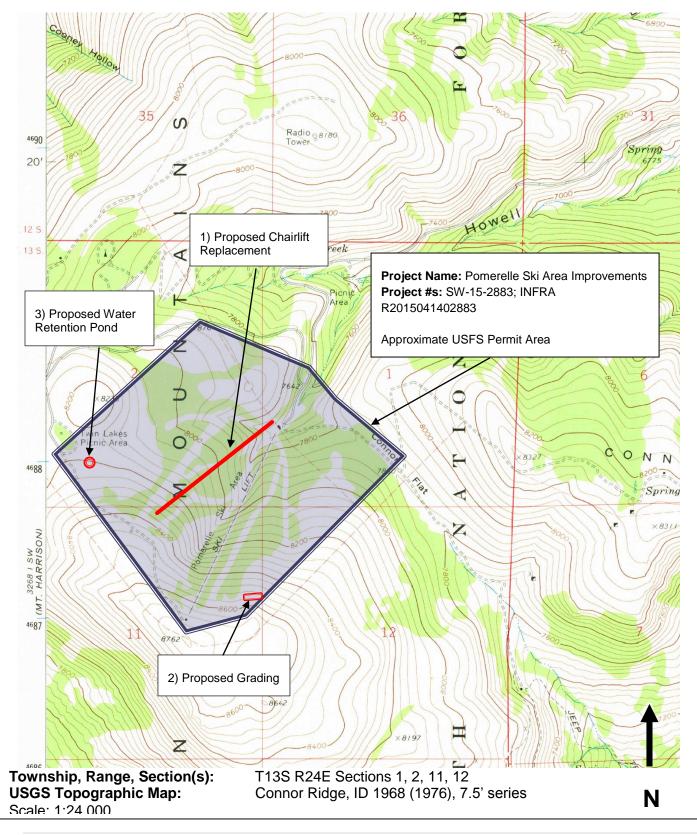
Intermountain Region, Region 4 Records

- Arave, Joe. "The Forest Service Takes to the Slopes: The Birth of Utah's Ski Industry and the Role of The Forest Service." Utah Historical Quarterly 70, No. 4 (Fall 2002).
- U. S. Department of Agriculture, Intermountain Region, Forest Service. "Enjoy Winter Sports in Your National Forests Intermountain Region." Ogden, Utah: Division of Information and Education, Forest Service, 1938.

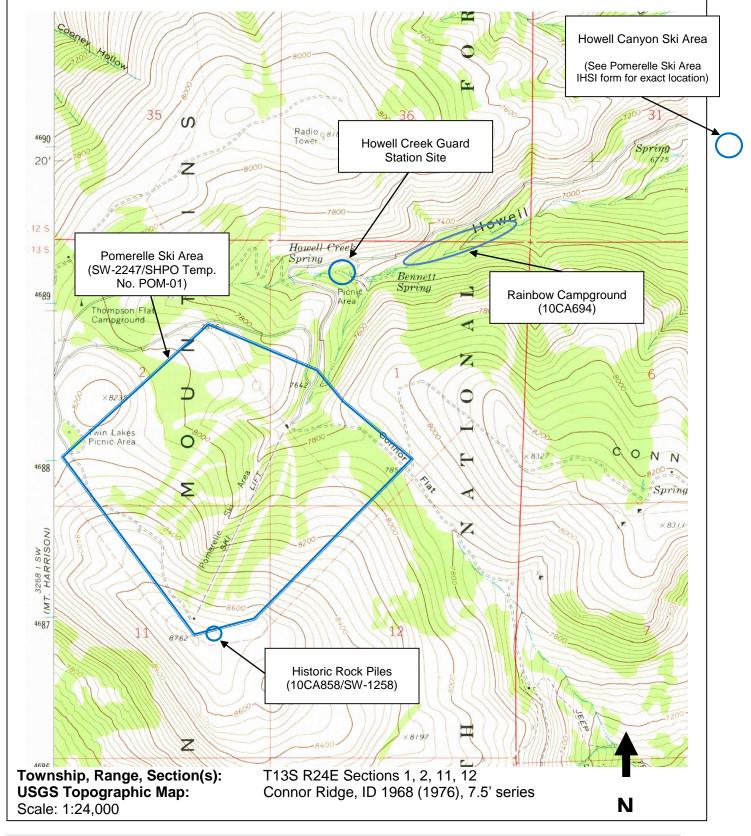
Maps

Project Location





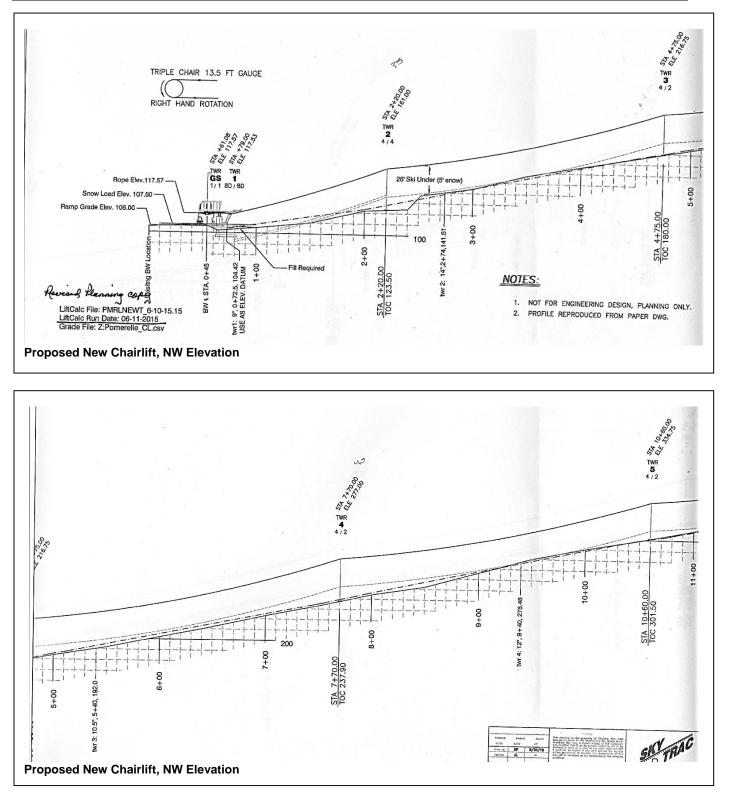
Project Area of Potential Effect (APE)

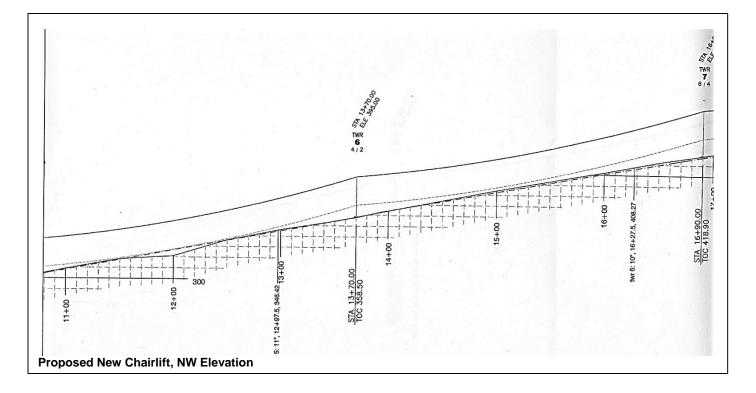


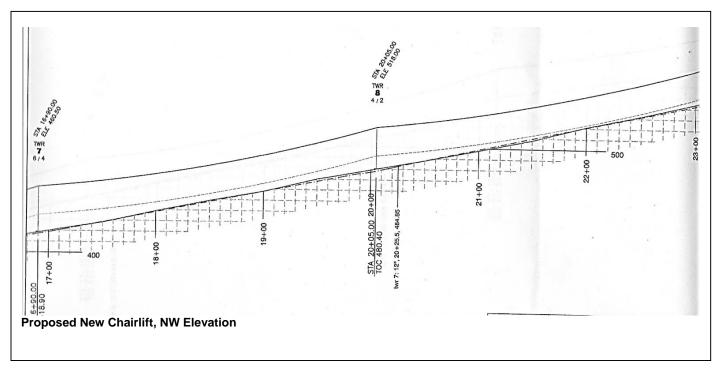
Previously Recorded, Newly Recorded, & Noted but Not Recorded Sites

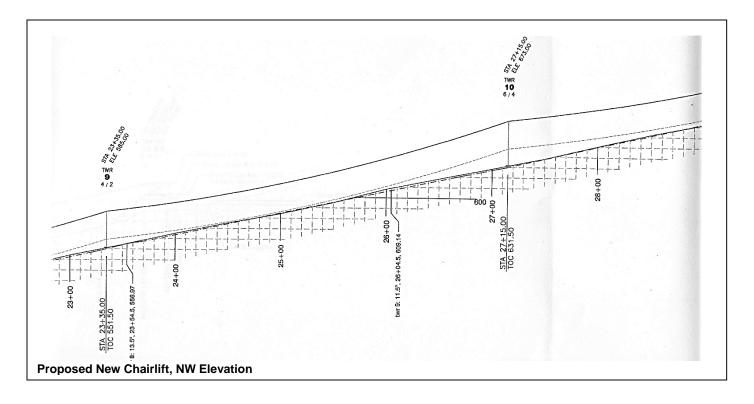
Plans

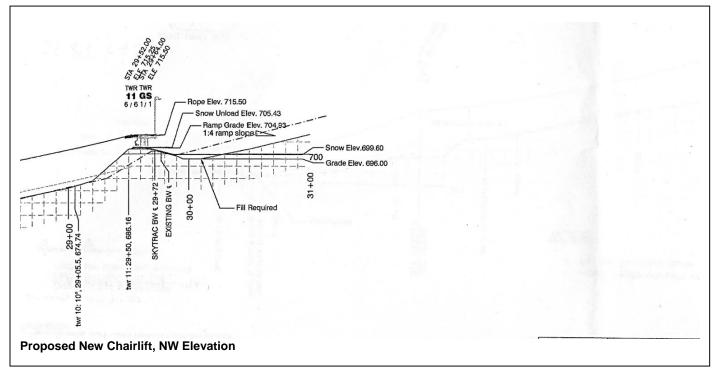
1) New Triple Chairlift









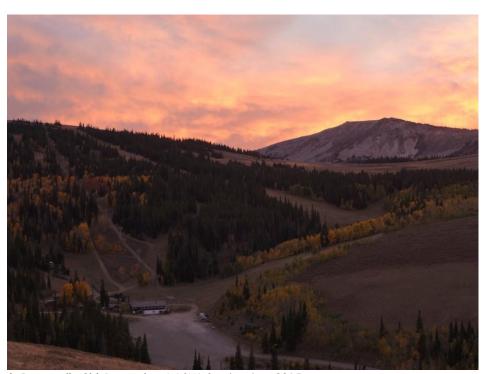


Photographs

Project Area and APE







3. Pomerelle Ski Area, view W-SW, September 2015 Note Day Lodge in foreground





Note chairlift replacement site at right; 1976 lift removed and new lift in process of installation



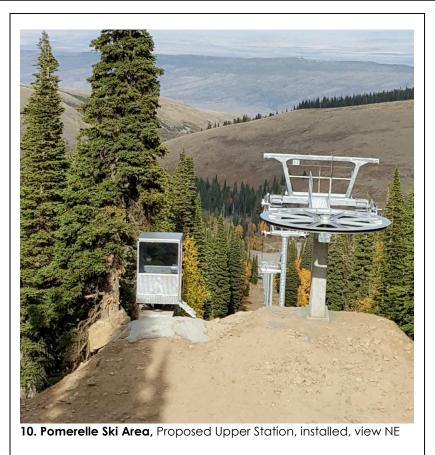
Project Site(s)

1) Chairlift Replacement

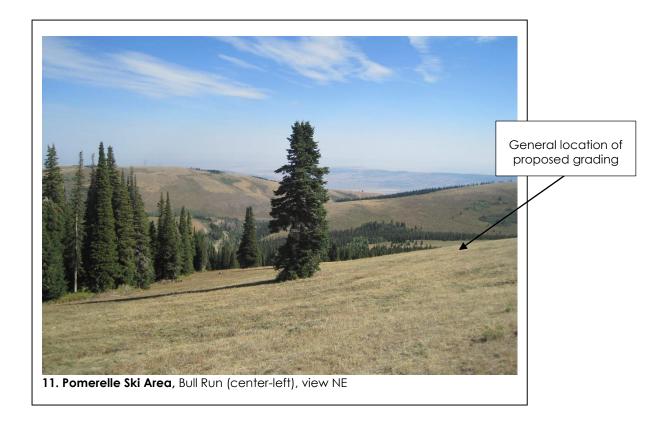








2) Grading



3) Proposed Snowmaking Pond



12. Pomerelle Ski Area, Existing snowmaking water retention pond on Spring Creek ski run, view E, September 2015



13. Pomerelle Ski Area, Existing snowmaking water retention pond on Spring Creek ski run Courtesy GoogleEarth

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